



## **THE ANGEL'S SONG**

As part of our Advent celebrations, we've been looking at the first ever Christmas songs, recorded for us in Luke's Gospel. Today we're going to look at another song, and this one was sung on the actual night of Jesus' birth ...

### **Luke 2:1-20**

There have been lots of Christmas songs written over the years, but perhaps the strangest was released around 10 years ago, called *A Very Silent Night*. You can watch the video on YouTube, but sadly, you won't be able to hear a thing: the song is actually beyond the range of human hearing, it having been recorded for? Dogs. In fact, dogs (apparently) love it so much they bounce around the place knocking things flying and barking at the sound-system.

But on the night of Jesus' birth, one group of people was given the opportunity to hear a song they shouldn't have been able to hear. How does the song go?

*Glory to God in the highest  
And on earth: peace, to people of good will*

And it's a beautiful sentiment, right? But it's also kind of implausible, too. I mean, the world was filled with conflict then, and still is today: wars, genocides, terrorism; broken marriages, broken families, broken relationships; stress, anxiety, depression. So where and what is this 'peace'? Well, as Christmas is such a busy time, I thought I'd make it easier on myself this

year, and get you – yes, *you* – to help me with my talk today. So this half of the hall, I want you to define the word ‘peace’, and this side, I’d like you to define the word ‘glory.’

**1) Peace.** What does the word ‘peace’ mean? How would you define it? Give me some ideas ...

- Absence of conflict?
- Quietness / silence?
- Calm / tranquillity / stillness?
- Equilibrium / balance?
- Contentment / satisfaction?
- Reconciliation?

All good answers. And certainly better than the Roman definition, the *Pax Romana* or ‘Roman Peace’ which basically meant invading a country, killing loads of people, and then saying, “Pay taxes to the Emperor Augustus, or we will destroy you.” Not particularly peaceful!

So what did the angels mean when they sang “And on earth: peace”? In Greek it’s the word *irene*, which literally means ‘unity’ or ‘harmony’ – so a pretty good word. But the angels almost certainly sang this in Hebrew – a language the shepherds would have understood - and in Hebrew it’s the word *shalom*. And *shalom* means more than just a house by the sea, or a log-cabin by a lake: it means well-being, wholeness, a sense of everything being as it should be, because your relationship with God is as it should be. It comes from knowing where you’ve come from, where you’re going to, and why you’re here – irrespective of your circumstances. *That* is peace.

Now where can we find a peace, a wholeness, like that?

The answer is in the first phrase of the song ...

**2) Glory!** What does the word ‘glory’ mean, then? How would you define that one?

- Brilliance / excellence?
- Brightness?
- Beauty / attractiveness?
- Honour / respect?
- Reputation?
- Recognition / reward?

In Greek it’s the word *doxa*, which means ‘the stuff that makes you go “wow”.’ But in Hebrew it’s the word *k’vod*. And *k’vod* means ‘weight’, ‘value’, ‘importance’: it comes from the market-places of the ancient world, where the worth of something would be judged by its weight in precious metal, usually silver.

Now 2000 years ago, people had a tendency to worship or 'worth-ship' just about anything, be it gods, goddesses, even the Emperor. And we're not that different. You can be an out-and-out atheist, and you'll still worship something. It might be your loved ones, your lifestyle, your livelihood. But you'll worship them, because they will be the weightiest things in your life. What the angels are singing is, "Planet Earth, if you want peace, then give God, the highest God - the God who created everything, who holds this entire universe in the palm of His hand – give this God, who has now become a human being for you, His rightful place on the throne of your lives."

*That's* what the angels mean when they sing, 'glory ...'

### **What Would You Sing?**

So wrapping this up: where can you find true peace, wholeness, *shalom*? In making God – Jesus - your #1. And understand: those 2 concepts – glory and peace – have to go together. When Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is truly glorified in our hearts, we'll know peace in our hearts; when Jesus is truly glorified in our world, we'll know peace in our world. But the peace Jesus offers is not an instant 'click your fingers and it's all sorted' peace: it's a ripple-effect in history, a gradual transformation of the world as people give their lives to Him. Because it's only when you realise how precious Jesus is that you realise how precious you are, and how precious others are.

What then do we do with this? Well, like everything else in the Bible, peace has to be experienced and expressed: known and shown. You might be here today, and on the outside, everything might look fine. But behind closed doors, you know you're in turmoil, or this relationship or that is in turmoil, and you need peace, you need *shalom*.

In some way, Jesus is the answer.

So there's one more thing I'd like you to do, now – and it involves a *Wispa* Bar! As these bowls of chocolate make their way around the church, I want you to help yourself to a piece, let it melt in your mouth, and pray along these lines:

- **Thankyou Jesus**, for coming into this world, for me.
- **Sorry** for living my life with me in charge, not You.
- **Please** help me to live for You, and know Your peace.